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## A BOOK FOR TODAY

*'There Is No Happy Way Out'*

STATINTL

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By DONALD MINTZ

**THE VIET NAM HEARINGS:**

Edited by the publishers. With an introduction by J. William Fulbright. 321 pages. Random House. \$5.95; softbound as Vintage Book V-354, \$1.95.

**SECRETARY (OF STATE DEAN) RUSK:** "The heart of the problem in South Viet Nam is the effort of North Viet Nam to impose its will by force."

**SEN. (FRANK) CHURCH (D-Idaho):** "Now, in Vietnam you can look at the war . . . as a covert invasion of the South by the North or you can look at it as some . . . scholars do, as basically an indigenous war to which the North has given a growing measure of aid and abetment; but either way you look at it, it is a war between Vietnamese to determine that the ultimate kind of government is going to be for Viet Nam. When I went to school, that was a civil war."

The debate about Viet Nam starts from these opposing views. It goes on to ask whether the outcome there is in the end terribly important to us. George Kennan says it is not; Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor says it is. There is also considerable question—to put it mildly—about how one attains the desired outcome whatever it may be.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings (January 23 to February 18) are back again in the form of a condensed version of the transcript prepared by Random House and provided with an introduction by the committee chairman, Sen. Fulbright. The publishers provide the complete statements of Secretary Rusk, Gen. James

M. Gavin, George F. Kennan and Gen. Taylor, and excerpts from their dialogues with members of the committee. A definitive comment about the editing cannot be made without a close comparison between the complete transcript and Random House's version. However, the condensation—read by itself—seems fair and skillful.

Most of the views expressed during the hearings have become fairly familiar by now. In a sense, then, "The Viet Nam Hearings" is useful more as a review than as a source of new ideas. George Kennan's opinions are the possible exception. They seem to be more widely talked about than understood. It is good to be reminded, for instance, that "it is not so that when men call themselves Communists, some sort of magic transportation takes place within them which makes them wholly different from other human beings or from what they were before. Feelings of nationalism, ordinary feelings, still affect them to a large extent. I think . . . this reality plays a part in all Viet Nam."

The hearings brought very little agreement. Very few views were unchallenged. But nobody took issue with Kennan's remark that "there is no happy way out . . . of this conflict."

In his introduction, Sen. Fulbright remarks that the hearings "provided the American people with the raw material upon which they must base their judgment of the efficacy of national policy . . ." This comment, unfortunately, is inaccurate.

First, despite their disagreement, all the witnesses and most of the senators took what is essentially a center

position. Nobody advocated immediate, unilateral withdrawal; nobody advocated leveling Hanoi or Haiphong to say nothing of Peking.

Second, it was painfully evident throughout that none of the participants—Kennan possibly excepted—knew as much about recent Vietnamese history as he should have or indeed could have by spending a single evening with any one of a number of recent books.

Finally, none of the participants who opposed administration policy offered much as an alternative though independent students have.

Two recent paperbacks can be called on for help. "Viet Nam Hearings: Voices From the Grass Roots" (Doubleday, \$1.95) is the record of testimony given at some hearings conducted in his home district by Robert W. Kastenmeier who represents the 2nd District of Wisconsin in the House. The grass roots in that district are a pretty fancy variety. They include distinguished scholars at the University of Wisconsin, some of whom offer their views in this volume.

"Peace in Viet Nam: A New Approach in Southeast Asia" is a report prepared for the American Friends Service Committee (Hill & Wang, 95 cents; hardbound, \$3) that reviews some of the important history, offers fairly detailed suggestions for an alternative policy and has appendixes containing the texts of the Geneva Agreements, the program of the National Liberation Front, and the text of a South Vietnamese decree of February 1, 1964, which in effect forbids expression of views contrary to the government's policies. There is also an excellent bibliography.